MS 081, 001/B

Pack Library Oral History Project

Juanita Phipps (Shope) Brown

Interviewer: Peggy Gardner

August 18, 2001

Side A

Peggy Gardner (PG): It's August 18th, Saturday and I'm at Holcombe Cove Rd. at the home of Juanita Brown and this is Peggy Gardner. We're doing a series of tapes for Pack Library about photographers and the history of photography in Asheville and Juanita has agreed to let me talk to her about her career and also about a man she worked for - Ignatius Brock. Juanita, tell me, I knew you as Juanita Shope, I believe I first saw your photographs as Juanita Shope, but what was your maiden name?

Juanita Shope Brown (JB): I was Juanita Phipps...

PG: And where were you born?

JB: I was born here in Buncombe County.

PG: And which part of Buncombe County?

JB: Actually, in the west part of the county.

PG: I wasn't sure about that, so, you told me that you started photography at a pretty young age.

JB: Right

PG: So, I want you to tell me sort of how you first remember being exposed to it, and how you came about to choose that as a career.

JB: Well, to start with I was in school and there was a school teacher that was an artist. And I used to go to her house and together we would paint scenery and such and procedures of knowing her and the classes she taught, she taught me to tint photographs.

PG: What was her name?

JB: You know, that's funny, but I can not remember her name. I'm not real good with names.

PG: Well, it might come back to you.

JB: She was an actual school teacher. And she was a very good artist, and she - I even helped her paint a backdrop for the

school stage. And we just become friends and after she wasn't my teacher any more we were still friends. But after she taught me to tint photographs I thought I knew it all. So I went to Shield's studio, which was in downtown Patton Avenue, Rosa Shields and I walked in with a couple or three pictures that I had painted of my family, tinted, and it was raining that day and I remember I was soaking wet, and I went in and told them I could paint photographs and that I would like a job.

PG: How old were you?

JB: I was fourteen years old. And she looked at the photographs and she said well, she was a very prim? Roses, she was one of the sweetest ladies that you've ever known.

PG: She was a photographer?

JB: Yes she was in Asheville on Patton Avenue. And she was one of the well known photographers in Asheville. I don't know why I picked her studio to go to because Culberson's was there, Henderson's was there, and Mr. Brock was in Asheville, too, at that time.

PG: What year about was this?

JB: You want me to tell my age don't you?

PG: In a round about way...

JB: Well, I was born in 1927, so that was 14 years later.

PG: OK, thank you.

JB: In the summer time, so, we, she looked at the photographs and she said you only know that the primary part of painting a photograph, she says you're neat in your work and I believe you could work(?). So she took me back and sat me down with one of the employees and she proceeded to show me how they wanted their photographs done. And they told me they would pay me a dollar a day while I learned and so for a long time I made a dollar a day.

PG: (That was pretty good.) Can you tell me more about her studio, and who she worked with, and how many people were working in there.

JB: Well, at that time when I went to work for her, I don't know where she learned her photography from. She wasn't anything like Mr. Brock as a photographer, but she was still quite a good photographer. Somewhere I even have some pictures of me, that she made of me shortly after I went to work for her. And, um, they did teach me to do photographs and some of the darkroom work, and it wasn't long until she was happy with my tenure with the photographs.

PG: Were there other photographers working with her there?

JB: She had, at that time she only had two girls working for her. Betty Estes was one of them and seems like the other girl's name was Myths?, but I can't be sure.

PG: Where, did you say Patton Ave.

JB: She was on Patton Avenue, not far from Pritchard Park. And I worked for her all that summer and then I went back to school and then the next summer I worked for her again. Oh I don't know, I suppose it was about three years I was with her, but Mr. Brock would always come down and visit with her.

PG: So you met him there.

JB: I met him through her. And one day he came in and he took hold of my hand and turned my head sideways and he said "I'd like to make a picture of your profile." And so that's how we really got to knowing each other.

PG: Do you remember him making the first picture of you.

JB: Yes, in fact, he said, I'll tell you what happened. When he was in there one day, and he said "Rosie, why don't you give me Juanita?" And, she said, "Well, do you really need her? (says) sometimes we're not so busy that (she says) maybe you could use her just part of the time." (he says) "NO, I want you to give her to me." And so I was, at that time I think she had raised me to $10 a week, and back then that was pretty good, and she may have nosed me up as high as $12 while I was there, and I thought that was real good, besides at Kress's and Montgomery Ward's and Woolworth's, they were only making $10 an hour- $10 to $11. A week - a week, yeah...so, she told me all right, that she'd give me to him and so I went with him, and I didn't know what I was going to get paid, but he started me out with $15 a week.

PG: That's a good rate. Where was his studio?

JB: His studio was up on Pack Square in the Liggett Building, they called it. So Liggett's Drug Store was downstairs and his was upstairs.

PG: Did he have big windows in that studio?

JB: Yes, he had those old windows with the moldings on them and such. And he put this puffed? paper on them and every so often we would change that to diffuse the light.

PG: Well, at that point had you taken any pictures yourself, had you started to learn about the camera?

JB: Yes, Mrs. Williams, had, she'd shown me a lot about it-and took me in when she was making...

PG: That was your teacher then,

JB: She... Just preliminary, not too much.

PG: that was the one, you couldn't remember her name, Mrs. Williams

JB: Yeah, Rosie Williams

PG: OK (cross talk)

JB: Wait a minute, she was Rosie Shields before she married, but she married a Williams

PG: Same person (cross talk)

JB: But she had, I'd never actually, it seems like that maybe once or twice she would let me shoot someone's picture if I knew them.

PG: Did she teach you darkroom work?

JB: She did teach me darkroom work. And with her that was about all, mostly I just did the painting.

PG: So, when you went to work for Mr. Brock, you knew quite a lot of trades, really.

JB: Well, a little bit, I didn't know as much about lighting and such as that, but I feel like he's the one that really taught me. Just like on the tinting of the photographs, I did oils, I did my tinting in oils, he did his in color-

PG: Watercolor?

JB: Watercolor. yes, and so that was a difference there. Even for him I did do some in oil, when he was real busy and we did some pictures, I would still tint them once in a while, but he made fun of my tinting. (Laughter)

PG: Well, can you describe to me, you were working just in the summertimes

JB: At that point, yes,

PG: Would you go to work like for full day?

JB: I worked all day for a dollar.

PG: Well, I'm trying to get a picture of what Asheville downtown at that time was and, I know he did all these pictures you've shown me, was he looking for work? Were people coming in in a steady stream? Did they have to make appointments?

JB: Well, sometimes he made an appointment, and sometimes he didn't. When I first went to work for him, he didn't have a telephone. But people would just drop in. And sometimes they'd just drop in and tell him they wanted to come in a certain day. Then after I went to work for him, he got a phone. And it wasn't long before we began to get, well, his business picked up.

PG: It did grow.

JB: It did pick up because people could call us. And we were listed in the phone directory. But that was after he had really had his fame, his real fame with, like women, all the honors he had won, and big conventions he'd been, and all the honors, and they stopped him from winning any more, and they (loaned?) a cup after him

PG: Oh, and then he wasn't qualified anymore.

JB: Oh, that was so someone else would have a chance to win.

PG: Were those national awards?

JB: Yes, Eastman Kodak company used to, years ago, they put out a thing where they would sponsor a convention, and I'm sure these were Kodak Co, or they did use to have on their files, a lot of his photographs.

PG: Probably do, we'll have to look up those copyrighted ones, and see..

JB: Well now, some of those may be with Eastman, and some of them may not be, some of them he just wanted to copyright because he just didn't want anyone getting any benefits from them. And in some cases he did sell a lot of pictures

PG: you could make good money...

JB: and for various reasons, advertising, or whatever.

PG: Well, now, you started out pretty young there in a career, what by 15 or 16 you were working for him.

JB: I think I was 17

PG: OK, so you stayed in this career then, you just kept on working at it, now, so you got out of high school at what age, 17 or so, did you just stay right there and keep working?

JB: Stayed right with him.

PG: So then did you work full time?

JB: Yeah, well in the summertime I worked full time, but in the winter, then I mean after I got out of school, I worked full time

for him. And I got married while I was working for him.

PG: Was that to Mr. Shope?

JB: Yes. And, but, he taught me a lot of things, he would, I would often just sit, and he would paint, and I would just sit and listen at him talk, and he would tell some of the most interesting stories, for instance, I remember he was sitting painting, when he told me this story. He said there was an old bum on the street, he come up to bum money off of him, and he said to him one day, he was standing watching Mr. Brock paint, and he said to him, "I wish I could draw, (says) if I could draw do you know what I'd draw first?" Mr. Brock said "No. I don't know, what would you draw first?" He says "I'd draw a good salary." (laughter) And he had lots of stories like that he would tell me, he would tell me stories about when he was a boy growing up,

PG: Where did he grow up?

JB: Down in New Bern. North Carolina. And he would tell me about his hunting trips, he even taught school at one time,

PG: You're good, I didn't know that.

JB: In his younger years, he did teach school.

PG: Do you know what he taught?

JB: No, I really don't, he may have told me.

PG: He may have been an art teacher...

JB: No, no no, I remember that he was real good at spelling and he had a beautiful, beautiful handwriting, it was a piece of art to see his handwriting. And he would tell me about his hunting trips, when he got caught in the fire,

PG: Tell that one again, that's a good story.

JB: He was hunting all by himself, and he would go out several days at a time, and he ran into, got into a forest fire. And he knew he had to do something, because it was going to overtake him. So he hurried to a field, mostly broom sage, so he just set that broom sage on fire and let it burn. And so by the time it burned a pretty wide space, he was, the fire was getting closer, and the smoke was sort of calmed down, and he just stepped into the place where he had burned, the ring was blowing it and making it go pretty fast, so he just stepped into the middle of it and when the fire got to him, it just burned around him and he escaped.

PG: Well, did you get a sense, in New Bern, did he grow up right in the little town there? Out in the country?

JB: Well, no, apparently, he was, from the stories he told me, it was pretty much country. He loved the outdoors.

PG: You can tell that from his paintings.

JB: Uh-hum

PG: I was wondering about that, you showed me a picture of one of his hunting dogs, or his dogs he loved

JB: I think that he actually made a little photograph of (one of the dogs) and he changed it, and I remember seeing a photograph and it wasn't exactly what that painting showed. He changed it a little bit different.

PG: And he would paint from photographs, or the other way.

JB: Either way, he would do either way.

PG: Did he teach you any painting skills?

JB: Yes, he made fun of most of my landscapes.

PG: Did he encourage you to try -

JB: Oh yes, one little painting I had done when I was in school, and my teacher had been along with me on the painting, I showed it to him and he made fun of it, and told me I could turn it upside down and do another painting on it, which I did, and I still have that painting, but I thought the first one was better. But he thought the second one was better.

PG: Well, he had a pretty good eye.

JB: But I turned it upside down and painted it over because he didn't like it, that's the only reason I painted it over. That was the only painting I ever did that I painted over the top of it. If he didn't like it, I wasn't going to keep it.

PG: You knew a good mentor. That was during World War II? When you first started there?

JB: Yeah, right about the end or maybe a little after. Maybe during it, yes it was during it because I remember when the war was over. That night I went up to be on the streets with all the other ones that were celebrating, and we went up to his studio and told him Hi, he was laying on his little cot where he slept.

PG: He stayed in his studio a lot, didn't he?

JB: Yes, in his older years he had a cot in his studio and he slept on that little cot back in the back of the studio.

PG: That's amazing, that was right at Pack Square. Well, he had several studios right around there, didn't he?

JB: Yes, at one time he was on Patton Ave. in the same location that Eckerd's? was also in for years, I don't know what's there now, but I know Eckerd's Drug Store was there.

PG: That would be in a stretch of buildings that are still there

JB: But, it would be in those buildings, about half way between the old Kress building and Pritchard Park.

PG: Did he try to get studios that had Northern windows in them?

JB: Normally did, yes.

PG: Cause it looks to me like a lot of his work was natural light.

JB: That's right, the older ones, especially. Now after he moved into the Liggett Building, he did do some that were natural light by using the reflector, and he made his own reflector,

PG: What did he make that out of?

JB: Well, he just used a nice white paper, a good quality, I don't know if that was, might have been the parchment paper in several coats, and he would move that light around and make that light reflect back onto the other side.

PG: Did you help him with lighting?

JB: Yes, I did, in fact he would be back behind the camera, and he'd say, move this light here, and (cross talk)
or he'd tell me where to move the lights, and then he wouldn't have to walk around to move them.

PG: Did he also use artificial lights?

JB: Oh yes, especially on cloudy days, he would use the artificial light.

PG: Do you remember that set up? Was it one or two lights?

JB: It was usually a two, and then sometimes it would only be one, using the reflector.

PG: So, it's almost like trying to reproduce the natural light look... I'm amazed when I look at portraits, that it's hard to tell the difference on some of them.

JB: It is, really hard. Now, he would also, while he would be painting, and I would be watching, or I would be doing some other work, he would still me stories, and he would tell me stories about how he would put, just had the glass, and he coated it himself, and had to bring it out while it was still wet, and drop it into the camera, into the holder, and make the picture while it was still wet, and get it back in and process it.

PG: Now, he only told you about this, you didn't see him coat the plate...

JB: That's right, no I never did, but I feel like that I did, because we had to use them in the darkroom developing film, and he would show me how they would swirl it through the... how they'd coat them...

PG: But you were using glass plates?

JB: Oh, yes, when I went to work for him, he was using the glass plates, and he used them right on a 5 by 7 glass plate. And he used to do, years before, the 8 by 10, it seemed like a few times, he did have Eastman Kodak Co. send him some 8 by 10 glass,

PG: coated plates

JB: that he did some on, and then he started getting the 5 by 7, and he did the 4-5 by 7 and he did the split 5 by 7. one or the other all the time I was with him.

PG: When you use a split one like that, how do you do that?

JB: Well, they just cover up one side

PG: In the film holder?

JB: Yeah, you just put it in the film holder, and it was a different type film holder then, not the slide type, it was a type that was made of wood, and it had almost like a sliding door, that would slide around, that you would put the plate, it had a place that you would lay the plate, in little slots, and that cover that you put in front of it, would hide half of it, so you're going to get a 3 1/2 by 5.

PG: Well now when he had someone come in and sit for a portrait, about how many exposure did he take of them?

JB: You would never know, if he felt like he got good ones, he might quit on six. Normally it was at least six. And if he felt like maybe they closed their eyes, or moved, or maybe he could get something better, he'd go wild, and he might shoot 10!

PG: Just to make them stay?

JB: Just? If he was having a lot of fun with a good character, he

would shoot more sometimes than on someone that maybe he wasn't.

PG: Well, you were telling me when we looked at these images a little while ago that mostly he had a plain, painted canvas background, then he would actually alter the negative to make all the varied backgrounds that would be in the print.

JB: That's right.

PG: And, can you explain to me, have you tried this, since you were a photo retoucher on glass as opposed to film and the differences…

JB: Well, when I was with him, I did, he showed me how and I would try it. And of course I couldn't do it anything near like him

PG: (?) had little paintings on glass.

JB: Yes, he would actually make it look like a scene in the background, and it really wasn't… that's the reason his older photographs had such character to them, you could sit down and in just a short time you could have a different scene in the background.

PG: And he did this with pencils onto glass?

JB: He did it with , it would be on the glass plate itself, with the picture already on it, and he would retouch the negative, to remove the wrinkles or whatever, he would go to the background and do those little things, and sometimes he would just make splotches on it, instead of just having a plain, dark gray background.

PG: Just something to make it artistic… I think that images just by themselves were artistic.

JB: After he started using the film rather than the glass, it was a little harder to work on it.

PG: But he did that on the film as well?

JB: That's right.

PG: Do you know when he switched over?

JB: Well, he actually did it slowly.

PG: Was it harder to get the plates, do you think?

JB: Well, naturally it was. They were so heavy and you had to pay a big shipping from Eastman Kodak Co. to get them and I don't think there were very many people who even ordered the glass.

PG: They weren't in as much demand.

JB: And, they were all using the film, but he could just do more with that glass plate, and the reason he quit doing it, is he would go down to pick it up when it would come in and he was coming back with a big box, they sent it in a big wooden box …

PG: Where would he pick those up?

JB: They usually, no I think they came by bus mostly. And, he was hit by a car, carrying the boxes with that heavy stuff.

PG: Did that happen down town?

JB: Yes.

PG: Between Cox Ave. bus station and ..

JB: and somewhere on Patton Avenue.

PG: You were telling me you went and helped retrieve the plates or something then.

JB: Well, the police saved the box of plates and brought them to the studio, and then I went through them in the darkroom and did get some out that didn't break, most of them broke.

PG: He was hurt pretty badly, I guess, then after that he had to use a cane.

JB: Yes, he went to his daughter's, and stayed at his daughter's until he was able to get up on the cane, and then I stayed in the studio, and whatever customers came in, I would make their picture, and finish them for them, and deliver them, and I'd go out to see him just every few days and take him what money I'd collected. Boy, let me tell you something about the money, this is what was so strange to me. When I went to work for him, he, every day he would come out and he would hand me one dollar. And he would hand me one dollar the next day. And one dollar the next day. Then at the end of the week, he gave me my balance of fifteen dollars. Yes, every day he gave me one dollar, and he had had some girl who had just worked, to sort of be there, I don't think she really did much except to be there. And that's the way she wanted to be paid, because she had to have a little money every day. So because he paid her that way, he paid me that way.

PG: Interesting.

JB: And I was paid that way on up until he got, until he had his accident. And I would keep the books, of what I had taken in and what I had had to spend, what the balance was, and then I would deduct my fifteen dollars, the fifteen dollars was the most I ever made while I was working.

PG: So you kept making that.

JB: And even after I stopped working for him, and went to work for someone else, I would still go get (that on?) until he died.

PG: Well, how many years did you work for him? On that fifteen dollars a week?

JB: I can't remember exactly. I'm guessing about five years. I wanted to stay with him, but there wasn't enough business, I thought to pay me, so I went to work for a dentist, and I worked for him for a week, and another studio offered me $50 a week.

PG: That was a big raise.

JB: That was really good pay, real good pay at that time.

PG: Now what studio was this?

JB: That was a studio called Buckler's Studio, it was a fly-by-night business, they came in and

PG: Butler, or?

JB: Buckler B-u-c-k-l-e-r I think it was. And they would run these commercials, of free pictures even, and then you get your free picture made and they high pressured you into buying more.

PG: Were they from out of town?

JB: Yes, and I did go to work for them, and I did mostly retouching, a little other things, but mostly retouching.

PG: How many people did they employ?

JB: Oh, they employed quite a few.

PG: Were they there in Asheville very long?

JB: No, they were on Patton Avenue right up from the Shield's studio, right there at, right straight at Pritchard Park, which is where they were, but he went bankrupt, and I worked for them, and then I would go see Mr. Brock when the day was done, and see if there was anything I could do for him…

PG: He was your friend and he was pretty old at that point.

JB: Oh yes, he was getting very old, and he was on crutches at that time, and I'd go up and just do what I could do to help him

PG: He continued to live there in his studio?

JB: He was still living in his studio, and then when I became pregnant with my son, Robert, James Robert, he, I retouched at home, I worked up until the day before he was born, and I then preceeded to take the retouching home with me, so I could look after my son.

PG: Did you go pick it up with your baby every day?

JB: Yeah, I would pick it up or they would bring it out.

PG: Well, who all brought it to you?

JB: Well, one of the employees

PG: At Mr. Brock's?

JB: No, no not Mr. Brock's, this was at the Buckler's studio. And they would bring it to me, but I still had to take time out to go see Mr. Brock. He made my baby's first pictures.

PG: Do you have those?

JB: I've got them some where, right now I couldn't tell you where they are, but I'm sure I've got them somewhere, and he made some real sweet pictures of my baby..

PG: Were you still working there at Buckler's when Mr. Brock died?

JB: Oh, no, no, no. I had actually, let's see, maybe I was, too, I'm trying to remember.

PG: I have those dates written down, want me to get them?

JB: I can't remember if I was still with him or not, I probably was. Yes, I'm sure that I was. And they knew I had to go up and see about him every now and then. And after my baby was born, I didn't help him as much for a while.

PG: What year was Robert born, about '48 or '49?

JB: '46

PG: '46. I had, I don't know, I guess at the library I found he died in 1950 in November. And he would have been, oh gosh, pretty old. Born in 1866.

JB: He was in his eighties. After I took him to the nursing home.

PG: 83 years old. So tell me about, he got real sick, but he still tried to stay downtown on his own?

JB: He was in the Liggett Building, and they were going to do something with the Liggett Building, so he had to move out. And he got someone to move all of his stuff in this other building, and I do not remember the name of it.

PG: That's the one we talked about, you think it might be where the bank (Northwestern) building is,. Or BB&T.

JB: I think that's where it was, but it was upstairs there.

PG: So, he really tried to make another business, even at that age.

JB: Yeah, he tried, but he was getting so blind, and his hands were very shaky. And if I can show you some of his writing, I have one that he sent me, in a letter that, and one that he sent me that was personally for me, and it was at Christmas time, and

PG: And he would make this special mailing,

JB: And he actually wrote a poem, and it was addressed to…

PG: the most beautiful handwriting

JB: to Juanita.

PG: will you read that out loud to me? What's the date at the top?

JB: the date at the top is September (end of side 1).

PG: OK, I'm going to ask you to read this letter to me and start with that date at the top.

JB: this was on September 31st, 1946. Christmastime. It was after Christmas, but it was still at Christmas time. To Juanita: by one who cares a lot for her.

> Christmas came and passed away. Where it went I cannot say. Would not, could not, deny to stay. But the gifts to me you sent, with the greetings, complements, and your thoughtful, kind intent, in my conscience will stay, not like Christmas, fade away.
>
> Sincerely, N. Brock

PG: Why, he's a poet, too.

JB: Oh, and that's not the only poem that I have of his. He wrote lots of poems, and this one was in later years and his handwriting was not as good, he's even made corrections on the paper.

PG: You can tell a difference. It's in 1948.

JB: And this particular poem was read at his funeral when he died.

PG: Who read it?

JB: It was a member of his family, it was whoever had conducted the funeral, I don't remember that.

PG: Do you remember where his funeral was at?

JB: At West Funeral Home in Weaverville. And he was buried way up on a hill. And you could look and see the mountains and the scene, and I don't know where he is right now, I went up one time after his burial, and made a photograph of the mountains, and I stood at the head of his grave, but did not show his grave, only the mountains, how beautiful they were…

PG: Oh, I like that.

JB: And his daughter felt like that was a good place for him because he loved nature

PG: He really did.

JB: scenery and everything so much.

PG: She lived in Weaverville?

JB: Yes, his daughter Ora(?) did live in Weaverville.

PG: These are wonderful.

JB: And there's the old stamp that tells you what the postage was for him to send the

PG: two cents, I think it was probably just one cent, but he put two on there.

JB: Well, I think the postage was probably two cents then, so he put two one cent stamps.

PG: And this came from 1 ½ Biltmore Avenue, so that was at that studio. Well now here he says Bucklers studio

JB: I'm not sure, that may be the way it was, it might have been Bucklers.

PG: Well now, how did these photographers, if these people moved in here and set up a (pause) OK, well now we're back. I was wondering if this studio you worked for came into town and they were making cheaper photographs and how did that go over with Brock and people that were in business?

JB: Most of the people who went to those photographers, they didn't know quality.

PG: So that was an entirely different clientele.

JB: That was an utterly different thing, and they had this thing that they mailed out where you could get a free photograph.

PG: So, it would be like going to the Mall, to get your picture done.

JB: Yeah! Yeah, and they didn't do really quality work. They retouched them a little bit. And they called it Ace. They said they "aced" out, if they didn't buy it. But they still gave them their free photograph. But nine chances out of ten, they'd buy it, if they ? gave them an 8 X 10, they'd at least have to have another , small ones at least, so, most of the people… they made money. But I think the reason they went broke, or were ready to go broke, and go to another town.

PG: Maybe so, there might have been something else going on there. Well, you talked to me a little bit earlier, about Brock's clientele, you said those were really the..

JB: They were the better class of people in town, the Doctors,

PG: quite dressed up in these photos.

JB: Doctors and lawyers, and just like one of the pictures I have there, the lady's name was Moffet. And I have a picture of her when she was a little girl. Well, when she was grown, she came up there, and I was with him, and, she had her picture made. And I believe somewhere I even have a picture of her after she was grown up.

PG: So, it would be a family tradition to have their pictures taken.

JB: Yes, I mean, who's who came to Mr. Brock. And then in the later years of course, Culberson came in, Lyle Henderson came in, and they were our really good photographers.

PG: Did either of them train with Mr. Brock?

JB: No. Now Mrs. Howard worked with Mr. Brock at one time. She was a good photographer. But she was just about going out about the time that I started to knowing the rest of the photographers in Asheville. In fact, Irvin Putnam had (?) a studio at one time

PG: He worked with Mrs. Howard?

JB: No, he didn't work with her, he bought her out. And

PG: I think you told us that earlier.

JB: Yes, and, but she worked with him I believe when he was at Eckerd's, down where Eckerd's was on Patton Avenue. They worked in the same studio.

PG: Did you do retouching for Culberson and Henderson as well?

JB: I never did any for Henderson, however, I was good friends with Henderson, and he even got me to going to the conventions. He had me to go to the conventions, and he had me to put on my first program.

PG: So, that was the state photographer's organization?

JB: Yes. The Carolina Photographers. I did a demonstration on retouching photographs. And then he also encouraged me to go to one of the national conventions. And I put on one at a national convention. I never got my Masters degree, Pop Culberson and Lyle Henderson, they were both masters.

PG: Where would you get those degrees?

JB: Well, the way that you would get them, is that you'd keep entering enough photographs, and put on enough programs, that you build up so many merits.

PG: So, it's a professional degree from this organization.

JB: Right. And they had both done exhibits of their photographs and lots of honors. And they also did programs. And I did one program with Lyle Henderson, and he did part of it and I did part of it.

PG: Where would you go to get those?

JB: Well, let's see, I went to some of the conventions in North Carolina, and I recall going to Atlanta once. I went with Pop Culberson that time, he wanted me to drive. And we went down and I did one down there. And then, I went to Nashville, Tennessee. And did (one), Lyle Henderson was there in Nashville. I think he was the one who started me out, getting me onto doing these retouching programs.

PG: He sponsored you?

JB: Well, not exactly sponsored,

PG: Encouraged you?

JB: Yeah, and he told them about me. So I could do well on doing… I have some papers over there that show them my pictures and tell them about the program we put on.

PG: And that newsletter you put out, you had a column in that.

JB: Well, that was in the Carolina Photographer's, I worked as a reporter for it, they came out about once a month, maybe once every quarter, and for a couple of years, and I would do an article, for each time one would come out.

PG: What was the ratio of women to men?

JB: Oh, very very small, so I was real popular.

PG: I bet you were popular, but did you have some other friends who were female that you could kind of…

JB: Right this second, if their names will come to me, one of the girls that worked for me, she went to a lot of conventions with me, too.

PG: You mentioned her to me one time.

JB: Barbara Butler, I taught her to retouch, and that was the only thing she ever did for me was to retouch. But she has passed now. And there were some other women.

PG: Your sister is also a photographer?

JB: My sister worked for me. She worked in, I taught her to retouch also, so, one reason I taught so many to retouch is because I retouched for other photographers, even when I had my own studio,

PG: When did you open up your own place?

JB: That was after Mr. Brock had died. And…

PG: Was Bob in school already?

JB: My son was, I don't think he was in school when I first started, but his grandma took care of him. No, he wasn't

PG: Was that your mother?

JB: That's my mother. Took care of him, and I opened a studio up, it was above Pack Memorial Library, that's the legal building, that's where I was, and I was on the 2nd floor.

PG: That was your first place?

JB: That was my first place. That was where I opened up after Mr. Brock died and after I quit working for (?).

PG: You did tell me that after Mr. Brock died, I guess you went and you got some cameras and you went with his daughter…

JB: Yes, his daughter took some of the things to her house and I went up and went through some stuff, she said she had gotten all that she wanted to get, and she said "Why don't you take the camera ?" and she

didn't, no, maybe she took the camera to her house, and then I went back and got it, to do the pictures, and then I never took it back, cause she said just use it and take care of it, and so I opened my place up.

PG: Well, tell me what that was like, how many rooms did you have…

JB: Well, I just… my Dad came up and he sort of built up a little ole place for me a darkroom and I had one big room to start with. And then later on, the people next door moved out, there was a door between, so then I had two real large rooms, instead of just one big one.

PG: So, how did you set those up different?

JB: Well, on the one side, I had a little, sort of reception area, and I made picture frames in the back side of that room, and then in the other room was where I made photographs and my little darkroom was up sort of in one corner.

PG: You made the frames, too?

JB: Yes, one reason I started making frames was because this motel wanted some scenery pictures and I decided, why shouldn't I make the money.

PG: good idea!

JB: So I ordered the picture frame molding and bought myself a vice, and miter saw, and I set up

PG: and you're in business!

JB: Yes, I made the pictures and that way I sold pictures of the pictures I made

PG: and you could have them framed right there, that's a good idea

JB: Yeah, but it never turned into a real, real big business, but I've still got the miter, and I've still got the (cross talk) miter saw and the vice, and I use it now and then. In fact, we used it just this past year.

PG: Well, how long were you in the Legal Building there?

JB: You know it's strange, but I can't remember. My son, I have pictures that I made of him while I was there in the Legal Building, and later I, they, for some reason they were redoing the Legal Building and I moved out to Fenner? Avenue. That's over pretty close to where the Allen's? School for Girls used to be.

PG: Near my house on Edgewood, is that where Fenner? The one right next door to me? Off of Merrimon?

JB: No, no, no. No, that's not Fenner, that's Furman. I'm getting my story mixed. That's over…

PG: Off of Charlotte?

JB: Yeah, where you go, not long before you go through the tunnel.

PG: And that is the Allen School. OK, now I know where you're talking about.

JB: Old Mission Hospital…

PG: Before the expressway or anything.

JB: Right, and the old Mission Hospital was just

PG: Were you in that Parkway? Which building were you in?

JB: It don't, it actually was a store. And an old gentleman had a store there his name was Books? And he, I moved upstairs and part of the upstairs, and he lived in part of the upstairs. And I put my studio downstairs.

PG: Did you live upstairs?

JB: Yes.

PG: With your whole family?

JB: With just myself and my son. And the other part of the house, he lived in, the smaller part in back.

PG: Kind of convenient, you could just go to work right there.

JB: Right! And I could look after my son at the same time, he was around, when I opened that, he was around nine years old.

PG: Did Bob help you in the studio?

JB: Well, yes, he didn't then, but later on, after, that was when I had my best business there and I was also doing retouching for other studios, Pop Culberson I did for, I did some for Dick Putnam. And of course Buckler Studio had already gone. Good riddance! But I was doing the retouching and I even had people from down in the Eastern part of the state to mail me their retouching, or send it up on the bus.

PG: ? for it.

JB: Yes, and I would do the retouching and I hired people to help me with retouching. Used to have a little Swedish lady that worked for me

PG: Do you know her name?

JB: Well now let's see, Dick Putnam, I was talking about her out there

PG: he might have it on that tape

JB: He has a better memory than I do! And he's a lot older than I am.

PG: Well, we'll refer to that tape for her name.

JB: But, Olson, her last name was Olson.

PG: Right, he did mention her.

JB: And she was an absolute, marvelous retoucher. She was an old lady and she spoke with her little accent, and she actually lived with me for a while, while she worked for me. But when I had to move out of that building because of all the, you know what's going on out there now, the expressway going through and it's an altogether different looking place.

PG: Oh I know, I remember

JB: the church is still there, just one block down, but everything else looks different. I moved up to my little house that I have down in Woodfin. And I got the contract to do Mars Hill College. I had been doing to retouching for them and hiring people to help me to do it for the people who had had it before me, their name was Randall. Frances and Andy Randall. And they did the College and

PG: the graduation photos?

JB: No, they did what they called their school pictures. And then they would sell

PG: for the albums and

JB: and extra pictures to them, and I had been helping them and then after I moved my studio to my house, I continued to help them, plus doing the retouching.

PG: Did you do other work for Mars Hill when you were out there? That would be Dr. Bentley, the President?

JB: Yes, but when, after Andy died, they did not do any more photography.

PG: Andy Randall?

JB: Andy Randall. And, after he died, I got the contract. And I did it for about three years. And that… I got away from most of my part, at least, part of my other retouching.

PG: Of your studio work?

JB: Yes, I got away from a lot of that, 'cause I just had so much to do. And I would work during the winter months pretty much, and I would have to, it was real good to have a couple, of free time in the summer. Oh, and I'll tell you a little bit about Andy Randall. Now, he, they were not what you'd say, really good photographers. They got along. Told me a story one time about this lady coming into his studio, and she asked him, said, "Do you make good photographs, or bad photographs?" He said, no, no, no, I got this story wrong. Said "What kind of photographs do you make?" is what she asked. And he said "Well, sometimes I make good ones and sometimes I make bad ones." And the lady just laughed and said "Well, you're who I want to make my photograph."

PG: I want a good one!

JB: He was a real character, he even looked like, who was the comedian now?

PG: W.C. Fields?

JB: No, (pause) looked a lot like Jimmy Durante.

PG: Did you say you worked with his wife?

JB: Yes. Her name was Frances. But, Andy, actually toured with Jimmy Durante.

PG: Oh, he did?

JB: Yeah, way, way back.

PG: As a stand in?

JB: No, not as a stand in, they would do a sort of a back and forth thing of jokes.

PG: He was funny as…

JB: Oh, he was, he was a real comedian. And he was a very interesting person to work for. He used to tell a little story. He likened? To hear about photographers.

PG: Oh yes, that's any of them, right?

JB: And he would tell this little story about they went up to this place. Somebody had ordered them to come out to the house and make photographs, so they went up and they started up the driveway to the house and this little boy was sitting out in the yard with his dog. And, Andy asked him, he says "Hey, that's a nice dog you got there." And he says "Yeah". He says "What kind of a dog is that?" and the little boy says "it's half Spitz, half Cocker Spaniel and half Bull dog." "Oh, that's a dog and a half!" A dog and a half. But he was really a very interesting (?). Well, they weren't around for a long time. They just stayed a while. In fact, they at one time, I think had a little place somewhere in Asheville. It never…

PG: They didn't stay?

JB: Yeah, never did too much. But they were interesting characters.

PG: There were a lot of photographers in and out of Asheville, I think during that time, because we looked one day in the city directories, just to look under photographers, and they would change pretty frequently. Some of them stayed, like you did…

JB: I was in it a long time.

PG: Yeah, you were.

JB: There was several that came in and just would stay a while. But I did the College, then for several years, and then I lost, I started losing the vision in one eye. And I had a detached retina, and that was back before laser beam.

PG: Pretty serious for a photographer?

JB: I was only – 32 years old. Back then they didn't have the laser beam. And when I realized what was happening, I went from one Doctor to another in Asheville, I think I went to about six Doctors, and none of them would tell me anything, except finally, an Optometrist said you're losing your field of vision. And so, I got Dr. Millender, which was one of Mr. Brock's customers and also one of my customers, after Mr. Brock died. And he called Bowman Grey School of Medicine, and I went down there, and they did surgery,

PG: They did surgery there?

JB: Had surgery on my eye, the first surgery was not successful, so I was totally blind in that eye for three months, and then they went back and did another surgery and it brought back my vision for eight years. And then it started going again, and I went back, and they did it again, but by that time the laser beam was out, but they couldn't do anything with that eye, but they did bring back some vision, and I was able after that to do quite a bit of retouching. I did some.

PG: But you gave it up for a while?

JB: Well, I did retouching right on and off…

PG: You just kept on doing it?

JB: Well, not into a lot. After I had that problem, I thought I wasn't going to be able to stay in retouching

PG: It would be very hard for that.

JB: And, I went to Blanton's Business College, and at the time I was going to Blanton's Business College, I worked for Pop Culberson,

PG: Was his studio right around the corner there, on Walnut Street?

JB: No, well it was, whatever that street is, well, where the Federal Building is downtown. Just across on the corner there, where the Federal Building is.

PG: OK

JB: But I would go to school during the day, and about 3 – 3:30 when I got out, I would go over and I would work, do darkroom work, do whatever needed to be done…

PG: What did you take in school? What were you studying?

JB: Oh, I was studying business. Cause I thought I was going to have to stop photography.

PG: But you couldn't quit!

JB: No, I kept working for him and I even began to retouch for him, I did a lot of his retouching, and I'd do the darkroom work, they would go home and I'd work until I'd get a certain amount of work done, what needed to be done, and then I'd go home, some nights it would be 10 o'clock or after.

PG: I think that's how all the photographers had to work, to keep up with it.

JB: Right. And then the next morning, I'd get up and go to school and I worked on Saturdays all day for him. That was a good experience. He was a good photographer. I wouldn't say he had that outstanding appeal that Mr. Brock had.

PG: Mr. Brock was another kind of artist, a kind of painter and photographer, and quite a character.

JB: a character, and all of it combined.

PG: But Culberson, was very, very efficient…

JB: Culberson was an extremely good photographer, though

PG: Yes, I've always though he was.

JB: But he, I think he did a little retouching, but very, very little. He always had to have someone do his retouching, and his son worked for him, Allen.

PG: He had Allen's Studio?

JB: Yes, later, his son, went out on his own. Allen did beautiful photography, too. He was also into the conventions, and he won honors, and I believe he got his Masters degree. Just like Pop had a Masters degree, and he was well thought of in the North Carolina convention, 'cause he got so good and won so many honors.

PG: Quite beautiful…

JB: He specialized especially in Prep? Bridals.

PG: that's how I remember him. I think all my Aunt's wedding photography was done by Culberson. They were beautiful prints.

JB: He won all these honors, and so many bridal honors, that they had a cup named after him, called the Culberson cup.

PG: Is there any part of that organization that still exists?

JB: Well, no. He moved from that building, and moved over into the Flat Iron Building and I began after I lost my contract with Mars Hill College, I worked a year at American Enka. But in the mean time, I was still doing photographs on the side for some of my old customers and all, but after he moved into the other building, his vision was getting real bad and he wasn't well. I began working then, after a year over at Enka, I got a job with the National Climatic Center, which later was NOAH. And I worked for the photographic department.

PG: Were they interesting?

JB: Yeah, that was interesting. It was a little different from what I had been used to all my life. I didn't get to do the more arty type pictures, but I would go over after work and help

PG: Well, what were the pictures like, were they aerial photos?

JB: No, no, it was just feature photos around the building, or like we would have, well, we had some company from Washington one time for instance, big officials from Washington.

PG: Beaurocratic publicity almost?

JB: Right, and I made pictures and followed them all day, they toured the building and toured the Post Office, and various Federal Buildings and I just followed them, and made photographs, and then we made up a booklet.

PG: I see, so you weren't taking pictures of thunderstorms or...

JB: Oh no, no no. My main job, other than those feature pictures around the building and such, I processed 16 and 35 mm film. Weather records, radar film. The radar film would come in from various radar stations and we would have to process them in a hurry.

PG: So they kept those records of how the weather had been.

JB: Oh yeah, and even like hurricane pictures. We had to get onto those real quick and get them processed. We had a Houston Fearless processor that was, oh my goodness, it was at least 12 foot from one end to the other. We would put the rolls of film on, and they would come off completed. We made copies of weather records, some of them would get old and no good any more, and we would have to make copies of them and process them.

PG: Was that microfilm?

JB: Yes, that's what it was, microfilm and also microfische. They did, one time they brought in some old weather records from way, way back. That had gotten wet. And they brought them to us still wet. The rows of film was almost dripping water, and there was even mold starting to grow on some of them. And we just had to take that film off and roll it up before it got dry, and then run it back through the fixing bath, water and re-dry it, and try to save those old records. And we all got sick because the mold was all in the film, we all got something similar to a real bad cold.

PG: Well, that would be bad.

JB: Everyone that worked on it got sick.

PG: Archival disaster.

JB: Right.

PG: I've had those pretty often.

JB: But we worked on into the night, until all sorts of hours, 'til we'd get so tired trying to get that film done before it had a chance to dry and stick together.

PG: right, well that's a crucial time there.

JB: But, there was some records lost, but we saved a lot of them, too. We'd make it up in big rolls of about ten or twelve (it was 35 mm) ...10 to 12 inches across, put it on the machine, and have to remember which box it went back into, re-label boxes and put it back into fresh boxes. Drove? It back down.

PG: That's the kind of work I'm doing now in archives, where hopefully you don't run into disasters like that, but they happen.

JB: Oh yes, they do. It was an interesting job. Then I had to retire because of my vision. I got a detached retina in the other eye. And my vision was so bad that when I inspected my microfische, I was working with microfische at that time, then I was the regular microfilm,

PG: That's a tinier area, then, that would be even harder to see

JB: Yes, it comes on a sheet, and it would, it got so that I'd see double and I couldn't tell whether my machine was malfunctioning when I was copying them, or if it was my eyes.

PG: Time to give that up.

JB: So after that I did very little photography other than pulling out the old equipment that Mr. Brock had had and

PG: Have you tried to go back and use that again?

JB: Well, yes, after I went out I had a little set up there at my house, I did do some of it.

PG: Well, Juanita, I think we should do it again.

JB: Well, I don't really feel like I have the vision to do it. I'm going to have cataract surgery within the next month.

PG: They can do some remarkable things.

JB: I'd like to do some work for myself now. I'd like to do some painting, I'd like to do some things like that. Maybe just scenery painting...

End of tape.